

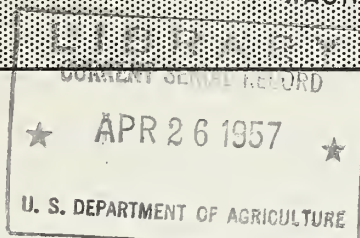
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AUSTRALIA: ANNUAL SEED REPORT 1955-56

SUMMARY

Production of grass and legume seeds in Australia during the 1955-56 season was generally higher than in the previous year despite unfavorable climatic conditions during harvesting time. Particularly the output of subterranean clover seed showed an important increase when compared with the 1954-55 season harvest, rising from 7,075 thousand pounds in 1954-55 to 11,160 thousand pounds in 1955-56. The increase in production was made possible by the greatly increased acreages harvested, which more than offset the adverse effects of the wet season.

Supplies of most pasture seeds are ample at the present time, the wet season having made the improvement of pastures impossible or extremely difficult. It has been estimated by various authorities that the area seeded to grasses and clovers in Australia will show an increase of only 1 to 1.5 million acres, compared with an average increase of 3 million acres during the past few years. Consequently, demand for seed has been slow, and even seeds of which only small quantities were harvested during the past season appear not to be in short supply.

Accordingly, prices for a number of seeds are somewhat lower than they were last year, while those for seeds in normally strong demand maintained last year's level or showed slight appreciation.

Imports during 1955-56 of ryegrass seeds were considerably smaller than a year earlier, but imports of clover seeds showed a sharp increase. Exports of both Wimmera ryegrass and subterranean clover seed appear to have been much smaller than the previous year.

Subterranean Clover:- Production of subterranean clover seed in Australia during the 1955-56 season reached record levels, despite the adverse climatic conditions in the eastern states. Heavy rains and floods caused the increase in production to be much smaller than would otherwise have been the case. Particularly in the Wagga district, one of Australia's major subterranean clover seed producing area, production would have shown a tremendous increase if it had not been for limiting climatic conditions. This point is illustrated by the fact that the area submitted for inspection to the New South Wales Department of Agriculture for seed certification increased from 16,313 acres in 1954-55 to 50,225 acres in 1955-56, or an increase of over 200 percent. On the other hand, production of seed

rose from 2,464 thousand pounds to 3,360 thousand pounds in the Wagga area, or an increase of only 36 percent. The Wagga District agronomist stated in a report that the interesting feature this past season was the sharp increase in farmers submitting areas for inspection, and the sharp increase in harvesting and seed cleaning facilities. A total of 535 farmers submitted areas for certification inspection, while the number of harvesting plants rose from 55 in the 1954-55 season to 80 in the 1955-56 season. The number of seed cleaning plants was doubled.

Production of certified subterranean clover seed in Western Australia reached a record level during 1955-56, and amounted to 4,184 thousand pounds. Cleaning and grading continued during the winter and final certification figures may be about 225 thousand pounds higher. South Australian production of certified subterranean clover seed during 1955-56 was considerably smaller than a year earlier, primarily due to weed infestation. Total production of both certified and uncertified seed was approximately the same as the total production for 1954-55.

Production in Victoria was also considerably higher than last year. Large areas were harvested during 1955-56, and production of the Bacchus Marsh variety was expected to be three times greater than that of 1954-55.

No reliable data are available on the production of uncertified seed. It is believed, however, that considerable quantities of seed were harvested which did not reach certification standards, or were retained on properties where harvested for their own use.

For the coming season, indications are that production in the New South Wales districts will reach record proportions, excellent growing weather having prevailed for the past few months. On the other hand, it appears likely that production in Western Australia will be somewhat down because of dry conditions. No good general rains have been received in Western Australia since the beginning of August and, consequently, seed setting may be light.

Another factor which may affect the coming harvest generally, is the level of seed prices. High harvesting costs may make it uneconomical to harvest the seed at present low prices. In addition, the improvement in wool prices may reverse the trend evident last year, when low prices for wool encouraged the farmers to harvest seed for additional revenue, and may now diminish the farmers' interest.

Other Clovers:- The bulk of the clover seed used in Australia other than subterranean is imported. Approximately 90 percent of these imports consist of New Zealand Red and White Clovers, but small quantities of clover seed are imported from the United Kingdom and Italy.

Local production of clover seeds is mainly centered in New South Wales and Victoria, with small quantities being produced in South Australia. The bulk of the production consists of Irrigation White Clover, a local strain, while some strawberry clover, berseen clover, and perennial clover seed account for the remainder. Ladino clover is not produced in Australia although quite popular in some states, particularly Victoria; requirements of this seed are usually imported from Italy. Trade sources indicate

that this seed is not certified, and consequently certified seed from the United States would be preferred. Due to dollar restrictions, however, imports from the United States of this seed have not been possible.

Burr-clovers or medics are grown in some areas of practically all States, with Barrel Medic the most important variety. Some strains are of particular value for sowing during the dry period in certain wheat farming districts. At the present time the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (C.S.I.R.O.) and the New South Wales Department of Agriculture are testing many different species and strains of medics with a view of finding improved varieties of this plant for suitable areas.

Dallis Grass:- Production of Dallis grass seed is principally confined to New South Wales and Queensland. However, production statistics for this seed are not collected and consequently it has not been possible to determine to what extent production varies by year. Trade estimates put the average annual production at somewhere between 1,200 and 2,400 thousand pounds.

Although the price of Dallis grass seed is somewhat lower than a year ago, it is believed that production was smaller than that for the previous season due to the excessively wet conditions in the principal producing states during the past year. The drop in price appears to have been due to reduced local demand.

Lupines:- The harvesting of lupine seed is confined to Western Australia, where considerable quantities of Western Australian Blue Lupine seed is produced. As in the case of Dallis grass, statistics on lupine seed production are not collected, and the only information available consists of widely varying estimates by different authorities.

The Commonwealth statistician indicates a production of around 50 thousand pounds of seed, while the Western Australian Department of Agriculture believes that about 60 thousand pounds enters the seed trade annually, with considerable further quantities being retained on farms where produced or sold in farmer-to-farmer deals. Accordingly, it may be assumed that average production during the past few years has been around 60 thousand to 70 thousand pounds, or slightly higher.

Alfalfa:- New South Wales and South Australia are the major alfalfa producing states in Australia. In normal years, total production amounts to about 2,400 thousand pounds.

Ryegrasses:- Ryegrass seed production in Australia consists of three varieties: Perennial Ryegrass, the bulk of which is produced in Victoria, Wimmera Ryegrass (*Lolium subulatum*), and H. I. Ryegrass. The latter is a hybrid between Italian and Perennial Ryegrass and was introduced from New Zealand. It is now in great favor by farmers in southeastern states of Australia. Production of Wimmera Ryegrass is considerably influenced by seasonal conditions since most of it is produced in marginal rainfall areas. Most of the requirements for H. I. Ryegrass are still imported from New Zealand.

African Buffel Grass:- Buffel grass (*Cenchrus Ciliaris*) is likely to become one of the most important pasture grasses in the Australian low-to-moderate rainfall areas. It was introduced in the early 1930's by the C.S.I.R.O. plant introduction section and has since been widely introduced in Western Australia and Queensland. Results have been very satisfactory, and it is anticipated that a much greater use of these grasses will be made in the future. The grass is drought resistant once it is established, in fact it grows prolifically in the Marble Bar district of Western Australia, one of the hottest parts of the continent. One disadvantage of the grass is that the seed is very light and fluffy and easily blown away by wind. Accordingly, it is necessary to broadcast the seed over broken ground and give a light cover if possible, or use stock to trample it down. On some stations in Western Australia covering large areas, property owners pen their sheep tightly, scatter the seed over the animals' backs, and when they are dispersed over the station the seed is distributed and trampled in when the sheep lie down or by the brushing of bushes, etc.

Buffel grass seeds prolifically, but mechanical methods of harvesting have not yet been devised. All seed has to be handpicked at present and consequently harvesting costs are high. One grower in the Central Burnett district of Queensland, who has the largest area in southern Queensland under buffel grass, had at one period during harvesting in 1954-55 more than 120 pickers working on 300 acres. However, demand for the grass is strong and production grows year by year.

Liverseed grass:- Small quantities of this grass seed (*Urochloa Panicoides*) are produced in Queensland. This grass fruits prolifically and spreads rapidly from self-sown seed and seed carried by stock. It is of value as summer feed and suppresses relatively dense weed growth, but by virtue of its low feed value in winter and the possibility of invasion of cultivated land usage has been fairly limited.

Molasses Grass:- This grass (*Melinis minutiflora*) is also exclusively grown in Queensland, particularly along the tropical eastern coast lands from Rockhampton to the Daintree. It is also successfully established on the Atherton Tablelands, Blackall Range and the southeastern coastlands. The grass is particularly useful as a pioneering cover following the clearing of scrublands. Seed production is mainly confined to Northern Queensland and principal producing areas are Innisfail, Kuranda, and Myola. Most of the seed is harvested by hand, which tends to keep the price rather high.

Evening Primrose: Small quantities of this grass are grown in South Australia, total Australian production probably not exceeding 6 or 7 thousand pounds.

Other Grasses:- Small quantities of other grass seeds, such as Prairie, Mitchell, Birdwood, Orchardgrass (locally known as Cocksfoot), etc., are produced in various regions of Australia. Information on production and consumption of these seeds is practically unobtainable.

CERTIFICATION STANDARDS

Although different certification schemes exist in the various states, standards of certification for major pasture seeds have generally been made uniform throughout the Commonwealth under an agreement between the states. Export certification, administered by the states on behalf of the Commonwealth, are based on the same standards.

The current standards for four of the grasses and legumes are shown in the table.

Table 1.—Australian standards for certification of specified seeds

Item	Subterranean Clover	Strawberry Clover	Harding- Grass	H. I. . Ryegrass
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Inert matter plus weed seeds - max.	2.25	1.5	2.50	4.0
Weed seeds - max.	0.25	0.5	1.00	1.0
Other crop seeds - max.	0.50	2.0	2.00	2.0
Germination	70.00	60.0	60.00	60.0

The specifications for weed seeds and inert matter are given combined and separate in order to allow a higher percentage of inert matter if the percentage of weed seed contents is below the maximum specified. In other words, if for example the percentage of weed seeds in a sample of subterranean clover is 0.25 percent, the maximum percentage of inert matter allowed would be 0.2 percent. If, however, there are no weed seeds at all, samples containing 2.25 percent inert matter are still acceptable.

FOREIGN TRADE

As in previous years, the bulk of the grass seeds imported into Australia during 1955-56 consisted of ryegrass seed. Imports of this seed amounted to 2,916 thousand pounds in 1955-56, compared with 3,494 thousand pounds in 1954-55. The reduction in imports of ryegrass seed was apparently due to the greatly expanded production within Australia, particularly in Victoria, where a record number of growers and exceptionally heavy crops combined to produce a perennial ryegrass crop greatly in excess of previous records.

Exports of Wimmera ryegrass were considerably smaller than a year earlier, and amounted to only 21 thousand pounds, the bulk of which was shipped to New Zealand. Exports of this seed during 1954-55 reached 76 thousand pounds.

Imports of clover seeds, other than subterranean, were considerably larger than a year earlier, totalling 1,618 thousand pounds compared with 1,817 thousand pounds in 1954-55. New Zealand again provided the bulk of these imports, but Italy, the United Kingdom and France also supplied important quantities. Statistical data on exports of subterranean clover

seed are not separately available, and are included with "other grass and legume seeds". It appears, however, that the bulk of the seed listed under this heading consists of subterranean clover seed. Accordingly, it seems that exports for subterranean clover seed during 1955-56 were much smaller than a year earlier, and fell from about 2,920 thousand pounds in 1954-55 to about 1,880 thousand pounds in 1955-56. The reduction in exports was mainly due to the sharply reduced takings by New Zealand, although both the United Kingdom and the United States also took smaller quantities.

Smaller exports of subterranean clover seed may have been partly due to dealers holding stocks in view of the adverse 1955-56 season expecting a shortage of seed to develop with consequently higher prices, a situation which did not come to pass, however, due to greatly expanded acreage and production.

Imports of "other grass and legume seeds" during 1955-56 were considerably smaller than in 1954-55, amounting to 1,244 thousand pounds, compared with 1,714 thousand pounds during the previous year. Takings from nearly all normal suppliers were much smaller, although imports from New Zealand were considerably higher than a year earlier. Slightly higher production of some types of seed in Australia together with a smaller demand due to adverse weather conditions for pasture improvement work may have been the principal factors in this reduction of all pasture seed imports.

Table 2.—Subterranean clover seed: Production of certified seed in main producing states, 1955-56

Variety	New South Wales	West Australia	South Australia
	<u>1,000 pounds</u>	<u>1,000 pounds</u>	<u>1,000 pounds</u>
Mt. Barker	1,613	338	1,568
Dwalganup	1,380	3,182	-
Bacchus Marsh	345	35	134
Tallarook	36	11	9
Clare	2	-	7
Yarloop	-	618	-
Total	3,376	4,184	1,718

Table 3.—Subterranean clover seed: Production by states, 1953-54, 1954-55 and 1955-56

State	1953-54	1954-55	1955-56
	<u>1,000 pounds</u>	<u>1,000 pounds</u>	<u>1,000 pounds</u>
New South Wales	1,568	2,912	3,808
Victoria	200	504	672
South Australia	1,926	2,240	2,240
West Australia	3,575	1,418	4,435
Tasmania	18	1	4
Total	7,287	7,075	11,159

Table 4.—Alfalfa seed: Acreage harvested, 1953-54, 1954-55 and 1955-56

State	1953-54	1954-55	1955-56 <u>1/</u>
	<u>Acre</u>	<u>Acre</u>	<u>Acre</u>
New South Wales	6,148	8,827	6,000
Victoria <u>2/</u>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Queensland	626	1,061	1,000
South Australia	15,079	25,328	20,000
West Australia	6	16	20
Tasmania	53	3	47
A.C.T.	-	-	-
Total	21,912	35,235	27,067

1/ Estimated except for Tasmania. 2/ Not available but believed to be negligible.

Table 5.—Imports of pasture seeds by country of origin, 1953-54, 1954-55 and 1955-56

Kind of seed and Country of Origin	1953-54	1954-55	1955-56
	<u>1,000 pounds</u>	<u>1,000 pounds</u>	<u>1,000 pounds</u>
Clovers:			
United Kingdom	19	1/	85
New Zealand	1,210	668	904
Canada	-	1/	7
Other British countries	-	12	1
Italy	155	368	510
France	2/	81	70
United States	2/	2/	33
Netherlands	2/	2/	8
Other countries	55	58	-
Total	1,439	1,187	1,618
Ryegrasses:			
United Kingdom	6	7	3/
New Zealand	4,789	3,254	2,720
Netherlands	-	-	1
Total	4,795	3,261	2,721
Other Grass & Legume Seeds (Including alfalfa):			
United Kingdom	158	183	181
India	1/	69	58
New Zealand	480	461	698
Union of South Africa	1/	321	42
Other British countries	13	11	2
Denmark	236	368	130
France	2/	50	20
Germany, Federal Republic	2/	13	17
Italy	2/	38	5
Netherlands	2/	64	35
United States	2/	126	40
Spain	2/	2/	11
Sweden	2/	2/	2
Brazil	2/	2/	1
Morocco	2/	2/	1
Other countries	46	11	-
Total	933	1,715	1,243

1/ Not separately available; may be included in "Other British countries".

2/ Not separately available; may be included in "Other countries".

3/ Less than 500 pounds.

Table 6.—Exports of pasture seeds by country of destination, 1953-54, 1954-55 and 1955-56

Kind of seed and Country of Destination	1953-54	1954-55	1955-56
	<u>1,000 pounds</u>	<u>1,000 pounds</u>	<u>1,000 pounds</u>
<u>Ryegrasses:</u>			
New Zealand	1/	1/	18
United Kingdom	1/	28	-
Union of South Africa	1/	1/	3
Other British countries	1/	44	-
Chile	1/	4	-
Total		76	21
<u>Other Grass & Legume Seeds (including alfalfa):</u>			
New Zealand	591	1,518	667
United Kingdom	2/	47	4
Union of South Africa	127	72	64
Papua & New Guinea	2/	2/	17
Canada	2/	2/	7
Other British countries	39	38	26
United States	587	980	890
Uruguay	26	127	177
Chile	-	3/	18
Netherlands	-	3/	10
Other countries	43	138	5
Total	1,413	2,920	1,885

1/ Not separately available; may be included with "Other grass and legume seeds". 2/ Not separately available; may be included with "Other British countries". 3/ Not separately available; may be included with "Other countries".

Table 7.—Agricultural Seed Prices: November 1956 with comparison, per pound, f.o.b. in hundred pound lots

Kind of Seed	November 1955	September 1956	November 1956
	Cents per lb.	Cents per lb.	Cents per lb.
<u>Subterranean Clover:</u>			
Dwalganup, Certified	30.8	22.4	30.8
Bacchus Marsh, Certified	95.2	75.6	95.2
Mt. Barker, Certified	33.6	38.3	33.6
Tallarook, Certified	75.6	80.3	75.6
<u>Other Clovers & Medics:</u>			
Berseem Clover	25.2	48.5	25.2
New Zealand Red Clover	73.7	48.5	73.7
<u>Alfalfa:</u>			
Hunter River	88.7	82.1	88.7
Townsville	—	156.8	112.0
<u>Grasses:</u>			
Buffel, West Australia	128.8	134.4	128.8
Birdwood	179.2	179.2	179.2
Liverseed (Eurochloa)	59.7	81.0	59.7
Molasses grass	102.7	102.7	102.7
Panic, Green	162.4	131.6	162.4
Dallis Grass (Pasp. dilitatum)	68.1	52.3	68.1
Prairie grass	23.3	16.7	23.3
Rhodes	53.2	57.9	53.2
Sudan, Common	11.2	12.1	11.2
Sudan, Sweet	22.4	25.2	22.4